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SUBJECT: KENYA - FEBRUARY 20 SITREP

REF: NAIROBI 477

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¶1. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS: On the heels of the Secretary's successful visit, which is being reported in septels, the Kofi Annan-led negotiations in Nairobi resumed in earnest on February 19. Annan says that the parties are close to a deal on political power-sharing and we are optimistic that he is correct. One good sign was the formation of negotiation subcommittees on the 19th. These groups have been tasked with reviewing what the parties agreed on February 1 would be "phase four" issues, such as constitutional, land, and electoral reform. This may indicate that the negotiators feel they are close to an agreement on power-sharing, otherwise such preparations would be a pointless exercise.

¶2. (SBU) SECURITY SITUATION: The security situation throughout Kenya continues to remain calm, with the same caveat that anxiety surrounds the outcome of ongoing talks led by Kofi Annan. The carjacking of a U.S. Mission employee in broad daylight late last week - unrelated to the political crisis - served as a reminder that Nairobi is critical threat for crime for a reason.

¶3. (SBU) U.S. MISSION POSTURE: Eight USDH emergency personnel are deployed to the authorized departure area of Kisumu and environs. CDC has five USDH in Kisumu, and MRU has two USDH in Kisumu and one in Kericho. Their deployment was approved on Monday by the Ambassador. All emergency personnel currently plan to return to Nairobi on Friday. All Nairobi USG offices are operating normally, as are local schools. In-country travel policy is in effect and all personnel and family members are accounted for.

¶4. (SBU) HUMANITARIAN SITUATION: A recent USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) assessment trip to 16 internally displaced person (IDP) camps in Rift Valley Province noted that the overall humanitarian response to post-election violence is shifting from a focus on providing for immediate needs to preparation for a protracted displacement crisis. U.N. agencies, humanitarian NGOs, and the KRCS are consolidating smaller sites into larger camps and establishing longer-term health, sanitation, and livelihood facilities. During the trip, the USAID/DART spoke with several IDP farmers who reported the total loss of their 2007 maize crop and indicated that they do not expect to sow maize seeds by mid-March in time for the 2008 harvest. The next maize planting season in Kenya's "breadbasket" region will occur in March 2009, with the harvest in late 2009. It is not known what percentage of farmers are now IDPs. In response to concerns that the upcoming long-rains could cause disease outbreaks in IDP camps, USAID/OFDA is encouraging all health partners to increase public health surveillance activities.

¶5. (SBU) U.S. CITIZENS: Amcit wardens in Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western provinces all report calm and quiet. None reported any illegal roadblocks and all said that businesses are open and operating and that transport is moving normally. Those schools that are not on break are also open; however, the warden in Eldoret noted

that many students are not returning to several of the universities there because of ethnic tensions. The warden in Naivasha reported that some of the large flower farms have set up a tented camp for their Luo employees. She expressed concern that this tented camp is not far from a camp of Kikuyu IDPs and that if ongoing negotiations do not bear fruit there would be a violent clash between these rival camps. Post updated its Situation Update on February 15. Post is planning another Town Hall meeting for private American citizens on February 28.

Rannenberger